

Students trading up on options

Both the state and federal governments are pouring money into trade schools. CareerOne Editor **JESSICA LEO** and Education Reporter **LAUREN NOVAK** look at what is on offer to students.

THE pathways that lead from school to university or traditional trades are increasingly blurred with a growing number of specialised schools and programs attempting to put students on the right career track.

Outside of traditional schools, there are also Trade Schools for the Future, technical colleges and trades training centres, all with the goal of placing secondary students in meaningful employment, though their methods of execution differ.

A requirement of students to be "earning or learning" until at least age 17, skills shortages in trade areas and the lure of high-paying jobs in industries such as engineering and mining, are boosting the popularity of vocational education or apprenticeships at school.

While technical colleges - of which there are three in Adelaide - cater to students who want an accelerated trade pathway but also to complete their schooling, Trade Schools for the Future allow individuals to try a mix of trades and traditional schooling to ascertain what path they want to take.

Technical colleges started in 2006 as a federal government in-

itiative, but have since been taken over in SA by the Catholic Education Board. The Rudd Government has, instead, committed funds to build trades training centres in existing schools.

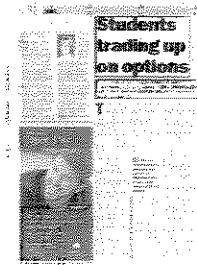
The State Government has spent \$29.5 million establishing the now-operating Trade Schools for the Future, of which there are 10 across the state.

These public schools act as "lead" schools attracting students from surrounding schools who are interested in trades such as manufacturing, electrotechnology, engineering and mining.

Trades training centres will operate in a similar fashion when they are up and running, complementing and effectively extending the state scheme.

SAGE Didactic provides work-ready and industry-approved training systems to each of these institutions and chief executive officer Peter Dawson says while all target the same age group - namely later secondary school students - there are key differences.

"They are all catering to the same age group (but) what they are doing is producing a slightly different output or slightly different planning path," Mr Dawson said.



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"My understanding is an Australian Technical College is looking more at people having less of a school environment and more of an apprentice environment.

"And then Trade Schools For the Future have more of a school environment and less of an apprentice environment.

"That being said, most are still doing the same activities ... the student is doing an apprenticeship (but) it will take a little longer."

At Trade Schools for the Future, apprenticeship brokers match students with industry shortages and openings, and also liaise with industry to report back to schools about what is happening in the trades market.

While their "core business" is public school students, those at private schools also can apply. Unlike the technical colleges, students remain at their original school, where they attend classes and leave to clock hours at their workplace or training organisations such as TAFE.

"Instead of being in a school workshop doing carpentry, the student is out with an employer doing the real thing, not a take-home project," apprenticeship broker Harry Moate said.

"Some students can do all of their training on the job and by correspondence, other students will be required to attend TAFE.

"The rest of the time students are seated in a mainstream class-

room."

Mr Moate said the "survival rate" of apprentices had been "quite high" and the trade schools were constantly attracting more students.

"Sometimes it will be an employer contacting me and saying they're interested in putting on a school-based trainee," he said.

"Other times I'll have been at a school and come across a student who's indicated that they'd like to do a school-based apprenticeship."

South Australian Secondary Principals Association vice president Jan Paterson - who is also principal of Trade School for the Future, Windsor Gardens Vocational College - says the advantage is in allowing students to choose their pathway gradually through experiencing both traditional schooling and trades.

"There isn't that situation where students are caught in a bind and are making decisions too early," Ms Paterson said.

She adds that after just 18 months, Windsor Gardens and Trade Schools for the Future partner school Charles Campbell Secondary College have success figures that speak for themselves.

"Apprentice broker figures after 18 months of work show 63 school-based apprenticeships developed and, of that, 17 students are in full-time apprenticeships," she said.

At the other end of the spectrum are technical colleges - located at

Christie Downs, Elizabeth West and Port Augusta/Whyalla - which are seeing 100 per cent of students vie for a career in trades with many in employment before they leave the college.

At the Adelaide South Technical College, principal Jim Fenoughty says the focus is on "higher end" qualifications - Certificate III as opposed to Certificates I or II.

"The end result is that the employer ends up with an apprentice who is work-ready both in skills and attitude," he said.

Similarly, Adelaide Technical College Northern Adelaide marketing and development manager Mark Priddle says one advantage of trade schools is their close connections with industry.

"These links allow us to have industry provide direct input into our curriculum and ensure that what our students learn is at the cutting edge of what is happening in the workplace," Mr Priddle said.

Either way, whichever pathway students choose, each are being enthusiastically taken up.

For example, since opening its doors in January 2007 the Australian Technical College Northern Adelaide has worked with more than 400 students helping the vast majority find apprenticeships and complete their schooling, and similar numbers and results have been reported from the remaining two trade colleges.

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WHAT'S ON OFFER



FOR Ben O'Shaughnessy, 16, attending a trade college rather than regular school all came down to finding a learning model which suited him.

The electronics student at Adelaide Technical College South said the opportunity to complete his SACE, get hands-on work experience and look for employment proved an irresistible combination.

"At school I distracted myself and distracted others, coming in here (to the college) you mature and you're treated as adults."

Meanwhile, his classmate Brandon Walczak, also 16, said he saw the future career path that a trade college could offer when his brother went through the college two years ago.

"It's a lot different to normal school, you don't have fixed lessons like science and English."



TECHNICAL COLLEGES

- Adelaide South** (Christie Downs)
- Northern Adelaide** (Elizabeth West)
- Spencer Gulf and Outback** (Port Augusta/Whyalla)

HOW TECHNICAL COLLEGES DIFFER FROM MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

A combination of:

- Education (SACE) ■ Training (Certificate III) ■ Paid work
- Year 11 and 12 only
- No bells and workplace uniform instead of traditional school uniform
- Qualified tradespeople on staff
- OH&S training and a six-month preparatory phase which features a "try-a-trade program" to determine their skills
- Subjects such as English, maths and science are taught in the context of Vocational education and training (VET)
- Employability skills feature heavily in the curriculum
- On graduation, students will be part-way through an apprenticeship with an employer

TRADE SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

- Glossop High School** (Riverland)
- Grant High School** (Limestone Coast/South East)
- Christies Beach High School** (Southern Adelaide/Fleurieu)
- Murray Bridge and Heathfield high schools** (Hills Murraylands)
- Charles Campbell Secondary College and Windsor Gardens Vocational College** (East/North East)
- Hamilton Secondary College, Thebarton Senior College and Urrbrae High School** (Inner South)
- Kadina Memorial High School** (Barossa, Lower North and Yorke)
- Parafield Gardens and Craigmores high schools** (Northern Adelaide)
- Le Fevre High School** (Western Adelaide)
- Edward John Eyre and Peterborough high schools** (Eyre and Upper Spencer Gulf)

HOW TRADE SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE DIFFER FROM MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

A combination of:

- Education (SACE) ■ Training (Certificate III) ■ Paid work
- Year 11 and 12 only
- Ten "lead" schools attract students from surrounding schools to take up school-based apprenticeships
- Twenty apprenticeship brokers (former tradespeople) liaise with employers to find work placements for students
- Students remain at their original school and work through the lead school and apprenticeship broker
- They spend at least eight hours in the workplace each week and often attend TAFE or other training organisations for further study
- On graduation, students will either have completed a traneeship or be part-way through an apprenticeship with an employer